



Speech by

Ted Sorensen

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL;
INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT (ASSET RESTRUCTURING AND
DISPOSAL) BILL; FUEL SUBSIDY REPEAL AND REVENUE AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Mr SORENSEN (Hervey Bay—LNP) (4.16 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill, the Appropriation Bill, the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Bill and the Fuel Subsidy Repeal and Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

Mr Gibson: You'd better hurry up. You've just wasted some of your time.

Mr SORENSEN: I have been listening to members on the other side all day and they have not mentioned those bills, so I thought I would mention them again for the record. The Bligh-Fraser Labor government will pick the pockets of every Queensland family and every Queensland business. From 1 July, it will be more expensive when you switch on the lights, when you turn on the taps and when you go to buy food at the supermarket. But, most of all, it will be more expensive when you go to the petrol station to fill up your vehicle.

How will this affect my community? As one of my constituents who is in the tourist business said, 'It's all right for jobs, jobs, jobs in the public sector, but what about the jobs, jobs, jobs in the private sector?' We will lose jobs in the private sector. After these outrageous tax hikes, how can these small businesses continue to operate? Some of these small businesses are closing their doors, and this budget will be the death knell for many more. This is on top of the huge increases from last year for some of the businesses in Hervey Bay, such as the Hervey Bay Boat Club, which had a 160 per cent increase in its lease charges. It went from around \$200,000 to well over half a million dollars. The tourist resorts on Fraser Island have had something like a 700 per cent increase in the licence fees to operate the sewerage treatment plant. These licence fees have gone from around \$1,500 to around \$10,600.

Other taxes, like land taxes, are affecting the operators of some of our small motels along the esplanade which are classed as sixpacks. Over the last three years, because the valuation of land has gone up and the threshold has not gone up for land tax, the taxes on one small operator have actually increased by \$10,000. That is an increase over three years. These businesses are struggling because of it. These are the sorts of taxes that we have to avoid if we want to keep our businesses alive, especially in Hervey Bay. Fuel taxes affect regional areas in particular, as people have to travel to get to those areas. Fraser Island pays a huge contribution to the Queensland coffers by bringing people not only from Australia but from all around the world. The fuel tax alone will cost us jobs.

The Labor government talks about having a world-class public transport system. So why was an elderly Hervey Bay pensioner stranded at the Maryborough West Railway Station at three o'clock in the morning with no public transport and no means of getting back to Hervey Bay? It is thanks to the kindness of one of the railway employees that she got a lift back to the Maryborough Transit Centre, which is

kilometres away. The Maryborough West Railway Station is on the outskirts of Maryborough and it is a fair distance from town.

I would like to table a non-conforming petition with 139 signatures requesting that Queensland government shuttle buses that currently depart from the Maryborough Transit Centre travelling to the Maryborough West Railway Station and vice versa meet with links to all services to and from Hervey Bay Transit Centre for the Cairns tilt train, the Sunlander and the Spirit of the Outback northbound and southbound services and, where necessary, supply an alternative service for Hervey Bay passengers to meet these trains. Mostly this will only require reorganising the timetables to give the Hervey Bay people the opportunity to get on trains to go north and south.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition relating to Queensland Rail shuttle buses that depart from Maryborough Transit Centre [456].

Let us look at the debt level of all the states in Australia. South Australia has a debt of \$7.8 billion. Western Australia has a debt of \$27.7 billion. Victoria has a debt of \$39.2 billion. New South Wales has a debt of \$67.2 billion, and people are saying that New South Wales is a cot case. Guess what? Queensland tops the debt at \$85.5 billion. If the rest of Australia is calling New South Wales a cot case, what are they going to call Queensland?

Queensland is the only state to have lost the AAA rating since the world's so-called recession. What a disaster for Queensland working families and businesses. Sooner or later this government is going to hit the wall. This government has not made the tough decisions to control the budgets in the good times, when the state had rivers of gold flowing into its coffers. What have they done with this money?

Let us look at what it means to have a debt level such as this. There are 89 electorates in Queensland. This is nearly a billion dollars per electorate, or \$78,000 per household. This government has failed the people of Queensland with this level of debt. How can we go back to the electorate and tell them that we owe a billion dollars? We have to tell the electorate that Labor has racked up debt of about \$78,000 per household, and I ain't taking the blame for it. The Labor government has robbed the piggy bank to fund the bad management—

Mr Watt: Bring back McNamara.

Mr SORENSEN: Like I said in my maiden speech, I got disillusioned with the amount of money coming into Hervey Bay, so I still agree with that.

People in my electorate want to know where the money has gone. We certainly cannot see that a billion dollars has been spent in Hervey Bay, that is for sure. This is on top of the rivers of gold that flowed into the state in the boom times. Why did the Bligh-Fraser government go to an early election? Why didn't they tell us what they were really going to do when they were re-elected? Straight after the election they said that we had financial troubles. What a fairytale that was. They knew all about it before they went to the election, and that is why they called an election so early. Selling Queensland assets—shame, shame, shame! Burdening all the families of future generations—

Mr Wilson: Haven't you read your own party's policy?

Mr SORENSEN: Yeah, mate; I will tell you about that a bit later.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will make all their interjections through the chair.

Mr Wilson: Through the chair, haven't you read your own party's policies?

Mr SORENSEN: You will find out in a moment. The fuel tax will have a huge impact on families struggling to make ends meet. What has happened to the once precious Queensland where we were proud of our assets? A further \$75 million will be spent on a hideous Traveston Dam. This government should feel shame, shame, shame. This Labor government has put nothing into infrastructure over the last 20 years, and suddenly we are going to spend billions on it.

Mr Wilson: Where have you been?

Mr SORENSEN: I have been around, boy, I can tell you.

Mrs Miller: He has been under a rock.

Mr SORENSEN: No, I haven't. I have been building infrastructure for the last 14 years. There is no forward thinking or planning for the future. We are just selling assets to pay for the debt incurred by this reckless Labor government.

I now turn to the health system. I must admit that the pathology laboratory for Hervey Bay is a good thing, but we do need extra maternity beds in Hervey Bay.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr SORENSEN: Do not laugh about the next thing I am going to talk about. I had two phone calls about a very serious matter. I had one on the Thursday before Good Friday from a lady who said, 'My daughter has just been up at the hospital. Her 18-week-old baby has died.' She was told to go home and ring the next day to see if they had a bed. That is why I ask for extra maternity beds. If you think that is funny, I do not.

Government members: Nobody does.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will speak through the chair.

Mr SORENSEN: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. Let us brace ourselves for the slash-and-burn fire sales. The first of the sales will be the Queensland Rail coal and freight. What did the Minister for Transport say a few weeks ago? 'Queensland Rail is not for sale.' I repeat: 'Queensland Rail is not for sale.' Who makes the decisions around here? By the sounds of it, the ministers do not have much say at all. What is going to happen to these workers and their families after the sale goes through? Who will buy these assets in this fire sale, or are we just giving our assets to overseas investors?

With the sale of the Port of Brisbane and the Abbot Point Coal Terminal to overseas investors, they will control our mines, our rail and our ports. What will be left for Queenslanders? We are selling Queensland's ports and selling our workers to overseas investors. We are selling the motorways. This means that a percentage of the money paid in tolls will most probably go to another company. Road transport is a very important part of our whole network in Queensland. We are selling our forestry plantations at a time when other plantations have gone into liquidation. What will these assets bring on the open market? What are we going to sell off in next year's budget?

Mr Watt: Not your speech.

Mr SORENSEN: That's for sure. They sold the Cairns and Mackay airports last year. This year they are selling off Queensland Rail, the Port of Brisbane and much more. What are we going to sell next time?

I am concerned that the government is selling off the rest of Queensland. This morning I listened to the member for Chatsworth criticising us about the efficiency savings in the public sector. Maybe he should read the budget. The highlights document of the budget states—

Public sector efficiency savings will increase to a total of \$280 million per annum in 2009-10. These savings will be achieved through productivity and efficiency improvements in corporate overheads, travel, publication, marketing and communication costs, and through savings derived from the recently announced departmental structure reforms.

How many jobs will really go in the future when this departmental reform takes place? It is quite interesting when we listen to some of the speakers from the other side.

This document was dropped in to me this afternoon. It just so happened that I actually went to an Older Men Unlimited function in Hervey Bay. A small group of men started up this group which is concerned with the health issues of men, especially older men. The document states—

International Men's Health Week (June 15-21 2009)

Eleven years of neglect of Men's Health.

\$9 billion budget for Queensland Health—but not even a line called Men's Health.

It goes on to state—

The Queensland government clearly doesn't care about Men's Health.

A message from the Office of the Queensland Premier:

"... men with health concerns can contact ... the Domestic Violence Men's Line!!!!"

Why would they want to contact the domestic violence men's line when they have a health problem?

I believe we need to open the door to older men's health problems in this state and this country. About 15 people attended the first meeting ever held. At the meeting last week some 130 men actually turned up. The guest speakers at that meeting covered topics such as prostate cancer, dementia et cetera. It gives honourable members an idea of things they could face in the future. I believe we should embrace such issues in the same way that women have embraced their health issues over the last few decades because that has saved a huge number of lives. I believe we can save a huge number of older men, especially in the area of prostate cancer and other similar ailments. It might not be such a great thing to talk about and I may be ridiculed for it, but I will stand up here for the health of older men. Honourable members can humiliate me later for it, but I am quite proud of that organisation in Hervey Bay. It is saving men's lives.

Mr Watt: No-one disagrees with that. We all agree with that.

Mr SORENSEN: Will you? That is good. I thank the member for that. I think every member should try to start up a group like this in their own electorate because it is saving lives.

I turn now to the Green Army because I have been involved with the Green Corps in the past. This gives young people the opportunity to develop their self-esteem. A lot of these young people actually turn around their lives around and go back to school. In these hard economic times I hope this program actually gives young people the opportunity to develop self-confidence to ensure they can go on with life. Some young people believe there is no hope out there. We really need some of these programs to work to give those young children an opportunity in life. I have seen desperate kids on the streets and we really need to

help them. I believe that we can help them through this program. We really need to work hard at trying to do that.

I would also like to talk about the road infrastructure leading into Hervey Bay. Around 10 years ago Steve Bredhauer promised to upgrade the highway between Maryborough and Hervey Bay to four lanes. It is good to see that we are getting \$16 million towards that road upgrade. Hopefully, we can expect more money in the future.

In relation to education I would still like to see more because education is our future. I guess everyone would agree with that.

In relation to police, Hervey Bay is desperate for more police officers. The number of new police officers will only cover the growth of people moving into Queensland. It does not rectify the problems that we have currently with the lack of police, especially in Hervey Bay. We have about 40 police officers to control around 50,000 to 55,000 people, not taking into account the number of tourists coming into the town all year round.

I believe that there are certain things that we do have to spend money on. We do need a proper police force in this country. I hope that Older Men Unlimited groups can be established right throughout Queensland to help health matters.